

# History-Related Books about Artists and the Arts for Young Readers

## An Annotated Bibliography

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History through the Arts & the Lives of Artists  
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# Introduction

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This bibliography was prepared in conjunction with the April 1, 2015 conference, *Sources of Inspiration: History through the Arts and the Lives of Artists*. It was created for classroom teachers, arts specialists, and librarians to use as a resource for integrating stories about people in the arts into curriculum units for grades 3-8.

Most of the titles described here are individual or collective biographies, listed under the categories of literary, visual, and performing arts.

The criteria for selecting books for the bibliography include:

- Artists who had a significant impact on and/or whose works help to illuminate the culture and history of the era in which they lived;
- Originality and excellence of the writing, illustration, and design;
- That the biographies provide important historical context;
- Balance of representation among literary, visual, and performing artists;
- Diversity of race, ethnicity, and gender among those profiled;
- Mix of titles for younger and older readers;
- Relatively recent publication dates.

Because of space and time limitations, the focus of this bibliography is mainly on people from the nineteenth century onward with a few notable exceptions. While an attempt was made to group visual and performing artists in sub-categories, many were multi-talented individuals who worked in more than one medium or art form. Therefore, they are listed under the one with which they are most often identified. (Note that Leonardo da Vinci can be found in two different categories—one creative genius who truly defies classification!)

Under the category of literary artists, there is a separate section for creators of children's literature. Students may be especially interested to learn more about authors and illustrators they are familiar with from their own reading.

It's also worth noting that the Performing Arts section features a significant number of singers, musicians and entertainers—many of them African-American—who have contributed to distinctly American musical genres, such as blues, gospel, jazz, and swing. While young people might not be familiar with them, recordings by some of these outstanding artists (as well as video clips from TV or movie appearances) can be played in the classroom, and students may then feel encouraged to read more about their lives and times.

In addition to biographies, there are many excellent books for young readers combining the arts with history. A sampling of recommended titles in this category can be found in the last section of the bibliography.

# Literary Arts

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Note: The section that follows this one, on creators of children's books, includes several authors who wrote for adults as well as for younger readers. Also, many of those listed in this section published books that are enjoyed by children and young adults, though they were not specifically writing for that audience.

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## Writers of Poetry and Prose

**Brontë Sisters (Charlotte: 1816 – 1855; Emily: 1818 – 1848; Anne: 1820 – 1849)**

**Reef, Catherine. *The Brontë Sisters: The Brief Lives of Charlotte, Emily and Anne*.**

Boston: Clarion Books, 2012. 220 pages.

Grades 6 and up. This biography of the three Brontë sisters explores their turbulent lives and the oppressive society of Victorian England. All three sisters produced one or more novels that are now considered literary masterpieces, including *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre*. The author also provides literary criticism and insights into their novels and poetry. Illustrated with more than sixty black-and-white archival images.

**Charles Dickens (1812 – 1870)**

**Rosen, Michael. *Dickens: His Work and His World*. Illustrated by Robert Ingpen.**

Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press, 2005. 95 pages.

Grades 5 – 8. This biography re-creates the world of Charles Dickens, from the author's childhood in London to his early career, his stage performances, and the great social and political changes of the time, which inspired so much of his work. The author addresses the reader directly, and he includes excerpts and literary analysis of some of Dickens' best-known novels. The illustrations vary from small sketches to full-page spreads and provide valuable visual details of the period.

**Warren, Andrea. *Charles Dickens and the Street Children of London*.**

Boston: Houghton Mifflin Books for Children/Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011. 156 pages.

Grades 6 and up. This book is both a biography of Dickens and an exploration into the terrible poverty and injustice that existed in Victorian London. Chapters about Dickens' life and his novels alternate with chapters describing the wretched conditions of the poor; the text explains how and why he wrote the stories that made him a great social reformer. Illustrated with archival material, including illustrations from Dickens' novels, period portraits, and photos of people and places. The extensive back matter includes discussions of children living in poverty today. See also Deborah Hopkinson's *A Boy Called Dickens*, a fictionalized tale in picture-book format, about twelve-year-old Charles Dickens who, despite poverty and long hours of factory work, is a keen observer of the life and people of London.

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803 – 1882)

**Kerley, Barbara. A Home for Mr. Emerson. Illustrated by Edwin Fotheringham.**

New York: Scholastic Press, 2014. 46 pages.

Grades 2 – 5. This picture-book introduction to the life of the American writer Ralph Waldo Emerson begins with his childhood in Boston and his desire to be closer to nature. He and his family move to Concord, Massachusetts – and the text explores his life and work, which celebrate creativity and community, nature and friendship. Quotations from Emerson's writing appear throughout the story. With exuberant and humorous illustrations and an author's note that provides historical background.

Robert Frost (1874 – 1963)

**Bober, Natalie. Papa Is a Poet: A Story About Robert Frost. Illustrated by Rebecca Gibbon.**

New York: Christy Ottaviano Books/Henry Holt and Company, 2013. 32 pages.

Grades 3 – 5. This picture-book biography shows Frost as a family man. It is told from the point of view of Frost's oldest daughter Leslie and is adapted from her journal. The story reflects his love for life on his farm in New Hampshire and includes stanzas and short quotes from his work. Twelve of his poems and historical notes are in the back matter. See also by the same author, for older students: *A Restless Spirit: The Story of Robert Frost*.

Ernest Hemingway (1899 – 1961)

**Reef, Catherine. Ernest Hemingway: A Writer's Life.**

Boston: Clarion Books, 2009. 183 pages.

Grades 6 and up. This biography of one of the twentieth century's most influential writers provides a portrait of Hemingway's complex life – his family conflicts, his travels, and his dark and tormented side. Integrated into the text are many direct quotes from family, friends and Hemingway himself. The author also examines the praise and criticism that Hemingway's writing has received. Illustrated with many photographs.

Langston Hughes (1902 – 1967)

**Berry, S. L. Langston Hughes.**

Mankato, MN: Creative Education, 2015. 47 pages. *Voices in Poetry* series.

Grades 6 and up. In this biography, Langston Hughes' poems and the story of his life are interwoven, drawing strong connections between his personal experiences and his writing, which focused more broadly on the experiences of African Americans in the Jim Crow era. The text includes information about his childhood poverty and segregated life in the South, family conflicts and awareness of his homosexuality, time in New York, his travels, passion for jazz, and involvement in the politics of change. With many quotes from Hughes' autobiography and period photographs. See also: other books in this series about poets, e.g. Maya Angelou and Emily Dickinson.

**Burleigh, Robert. *Langston's Train Ride*. Illustrated by Leonard Jenkins.**

New York: Orchard Books, 2004. 32 pages.

Grades 2 – 5. This picture book focuses on the transformative moment in Hughes' life when, as a young man traveling by train to see his father, he is inspired to write "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," which became one of his most well-known poems. Illustrated in vibrant mixed-media collage.

**Zora Neale Hurston (1891 – 1960)**

**Fradin, Dennis Brindell and Judith Bloom Fradin. *Zora! The Life of Zora Neale Hurston*.**

Boston: Clarion Books, 2012. 180 pages.

Grades 5 and up. This biography of the African-American writer of novels and folktales starts with the middle-aged Hurston working as a servant, goes back in time to her early childhood in the all-black town of Eatonville, Florida, and continues through her dramatic personal and professional experiences, including her friendships with other artists of the Harlem Renaissance, her anthropological research, and her death in near obscurity. Illustrated with many archival photographs.

**Emma Lazarus (1849 – 1887)**

**Glaser, Linda. *Emma's Poem: The Voice of the Statue of Liberty*. Illustrated by Stacey Schuett.**

Boston: Houghton Mifflin Books for Children/Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2010. 32 pages.

Grades 3 – 5. This is a picture-book biography of Emma Lazarus who overcame the anti-Semitism of her time to become a leading American poet. Despite her life of privilege, she was a committed advocate for the impoverished immigrants from Eastern Europe who arrived in New York City in the 1880s. Her poem, "The New Colossus," is engraved on the base of the Statue of Liberty. The text includes quotations from her work, and the illustrations bring colorful energy to the story. See also: *Liberty's Voice* by Erica Silverman, illustrated by Stacey Schuett.

**Gabriel García Márquez (1927 – 2014)**

**Brown, Monica, *My Name is Gabito: The Life of Gabriel García Márquez*. Illustrated by Raúl Colón.**

Flagstaff, AZ: Luna Rising, 2007. 32 pages.

Grades 2 – 5. This picture-book biography introduces Gabriel García Márquez as Gabito, a boy who views the world as a magical place and, though he sees the poverty in his Colombian town, also imagines a world full of wonders. The book explains how he grew up to become a storyteller who is admired as one of the great writers of his time. The glowing illustrations recreate both real and imagined scenes. With an appended note that provides more information about the life and achievements of Márquez; written in English and Spanish. See also by the same author: *Pablo Neruda: Poet of the People*.

Gabriela Mistral (1889 – 1957)

**Brown, Monica. My Name is Gabriela: The Life of Gabriela Mistral.**

Flagstaff, AZ: Luna Rising, 2005. 32 pages.

Grades 1 – 3. This is a bilingual (Spanish and English) biography of the Chilean poet and educator who became the first Latin American to win the Nobel Prize in Literature.

Written in the first person, the simple, poetic text follows her story from childhood, during which she teaches herself to read, to gaining worldwide acclaim for her literary achievements. In picture-book format with illustrations of the people, places, and creatures that Mistral described in her work.

Edgar Allan Poe (1809 – 1849)

**Lange, Karen E. Nevermore: A Photobiography of Edgar Allan Poe.**

Washington, DC: National Geographic, 2009. 64 pages.

Grades 5 and up. This photobiography examines the life and times of the author and poet who had a huge influence on American and world literature. Poe pioneered the psychological horror story, detective story, and emerging genre of science fiction.

Through his dark tales and haunting verse, he also made major contributions to the development of the modern short story and modern poetry. Illustrated with photos, art, and quotations in a dynamic book design.

Jalal al-Din Rumi (1207 – 1273)

**Demi. Rumi: Whirling Dervish. Illustrated by the author.**

New York: Marshall Cavendish, 2009. 38 pages.

Grades 3 – 8. This is a picture-book introduction to the thirteenth-century mystical poet. Born in what is now Afghanistan, Rumi settled in Turkey, where he wrote about the love that resides in the soul of everyone, regardless of religion or background. He founded the order of the whirling dervishes, who believed their spinning dances put them in touch with God and brought peace and love into the world. The author tells Rumi's story in brief but informative text with many excerpts from his poems and writings. Turkish miniatures inspired the small-scale, elaborately patterned illustrations.

Henry David Thoreau (1817 – 1862)

**Meltzer, Milton. Henry David Thoreau: A Biography.**

Minneapolis, MN: Twenty-First Century Books, 2007. 160 pages.

Grades 6 and up. This biography of one of America's most admired writers examines his beliefs, world, and powerful writing. The text provides a link between Thoreau's personal philosophy and modern movements and concerns, such as conservation, and notes how his views on civil disobedience influenced Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. With many primary source materials and quotations; illustrated with archival images.

Mark Twain (1835 – 1910)

**Fleischman, Sid. *The Trouble Begins at 8: A Life of Mark Twain in the Wild, Wild West.***

New York: Greenwillow Books, 2008. 224 pages.

Grades 5 and up. This biography of Mark Twain explores his careers as a steamboat pilot, a journalist, a prospector, a lecturer, an adventurer and author, with the emphasis on his early adult years. Told with amusing, Twain-style wit, the book incorporates many quotes from his writings. Illustrated with photos, cartoons and other archival images, and with extensive back matter. See also for younger students: *A Brilliant Streak: The Making of Mark Twain* by Kathryn Lasky. Also, two delightful fictionalized biographies in picture-book format: *The Extraordinary Mark Twain (According to Susy)* by Barbara Kerley, which is told from Twain's thirteen-year-old daughter's perspective; and Robert Burleigh's *The Adventures of Mark Twain by Huckleberry Finn*, which presents a biography of the author told from the viewpoint of his most famous fictional character.

Phillis Wheatley (c.1753 – 1784)

**Lasky, Kathryn. *A Voice of Her Own: The Story of Phillis Wheatley, Slave Poet.***

Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press, 2003. 48 pages.

Grades 2 – 6. This is a picture-book biography of the first African-American woman poet, who as a young girl was kidnapped in Africa and enslaved in Boston in 1761. Taught to read and write by her mistress, she was drawn to poetry. One of her poems first appeared in print in a Boston newspaper in 1767. She later wrote verses about the American colonists' struggle for freedom as well as the sorrow of being torn away from her own family in Africa. A collection of her work was published in 1774, and she was given her freedom the same year. The book also describes Wheatley's exchange of letters with General George Washington and her meeting with Washington at his headquarters in Cambridge. Includes brief excerpts from her writing and powerful illustrations that provide historical context of the Revolutionary Era.

Walt Whitman (1819 – 1892)

**Kerley, Barbara. *Walt Whitman: Words for America.***

New York: Scholastic Press, 2004. 56 pages.

Grades 4 – 8. In picture-book format, this biography examines Whitman's extraordinary compassion, which led him to care for wounded soldiers during the Civil War, write about the country's grief at Lincoln's assassination, and capture the essence of America's spirit in poetry. The focus is on Whitman's formative years, and lines of his poetry appear throughout the book. With substantive text and powerfully evocative book design and illustration. See also for older students: *Walt Whitman* by Catherine Reef.



## Creators of Children's Literature: Authors and Illustrators

Louisa May Alcott (1832 – 1888)

**Krull, Kathleen. *Louisa May's Battle: How the Civil War Led to Little Women*. Illustrated by Carlyn Beccia.**

New York: Walker Books for Young Readers, 2013. 48 pages.

Grades 3 – 5. This picture-book biography explores how Alcott's service as a nurse in Washington, D.C. during the Civil War influenced the rest of her life, including its impact on her writing style. When letters to her family about her nursing experiences were published as *Hospital Sketches*, she had her first success as an author, leading her to write *Little Women*.

**McDonough, Yona Zeldis. *Louisa: The Life of Louisa May Alcott*. Illustrated by Bethanne Andersen.**

New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2009. 48 pages.

Grades 3 – 5. The essentials of Alcott's life are told through vivid anecdotes that reflect her experiences and achievements. The text examines Alcott's unorthodox family, how she drew on her childhood experiences in her writing, and how this led to her unconventional and successful career. In picture-book format.

Hans Christian Andersen (1805 – 1875)

**Varmer, Hjørdis. *Hans Christian Andersen: His Fairy Tale Life*.**

Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 2005. 112 pages.

Grades 5 – 8. Written by one of Denmark's best-known children's authors, this book tells the story of Andersen's life, beginning with his impoverished childhood, the ridicule he experienced in his youth, and his struggles to become a published author before finally achieving world-wide fame through writing fairy tales, such as *The Ugly Duckling*, *Thumbelina*, and *The Nightingale*.

**Yolen, Jane. *The Perfect Wizard: Hans Christian Andersen*. Illustrated by Dennis Nolan.**

New York: Dutton's Children's Books, 2004. 32 pages.

Grades 3 – 6. This picture-book biography tells how the young and determined Hans Christian Andersen overcame a painful and deprived childhood to become a beloved writer and a world-wide celebrity. The substantial text includes many quotes from Andersen's own stories and explores how the tales were inspired by life experiences.

James M. Barrie (1869 – 1937)

**Yolen, Jane. *Lost Boy: The Story of the Man Who Created Peter Pan*. Illustrated by Steve Adams.**

New York: Dutton Children's Books, 2010. 40 pages.

Grades 3 – 6. This picture-book biography examines Barrie's childhood, which was marked by both sorrow and great adventure. As an adult, his relationship with the Davies family's many children inspired him to create the Peter Pan books. With quotes from Barrie's writings and large and colorful illustrations.

L. Frank Baum (1856 – 1919)

**Krull, Kathleen. *The Road to Oz: Twists, Turns, Bumps, and Triumphs in the Life of L. Frank Baum*. Illustrated by Kevin Hawkes.**

New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008. 48 pages.

Grades 3 – 5. With lively text, this book examines the life of L. Frank Baum from his privileged childhood in mid-19th-century upstate New York through a variety of professions until he finally achieved success writing stories for children. With vivid and humorous illustrations in picture-book format.

Ashley Bryan (1923 – )

**Bryan, Ashley. *Ashley Bryan: Words to My Life's Song*. Illustrated by the author.**

New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2009. 64 pages.

Grades 3 – 6. This autobiography is full of artwork, photographs, and anecdotes about a life devoted to art, poetry, music, and storytelling. The author faced many challenges – as a boy growing up during the Depression, as an African-American soldier in the segregated U.S. Army during World War II, and as an art student facing racial discrimination.

Virginia Lee Burton (1909 – 1968)

**Elleman, Barbara. *Virginia Lee Burton: A Life in Art*.**

Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2002. 144 pages.

Grades 5 – 8. This biography examines the life, career, artistic style, and literary work of the author and illustrator of such classic picture books as *Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel* and *The Little House*. Burton was also a dancer, musician, sculptor, and printmaker, and she taught innovative art and design classes. Illustrated with photographs and many examples of her work.

Randolph Caldecott (1846 – 1886)

**Marcus, Leonard S. *Randolph Caldecott: The Man Who Could Not Stop Drawing*.**

New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux, 2013. 64 pages.

Grades 4 – 8. Randolph Caldecott is best known as the namesake of the award that honors picture-book illustration. As an artist and illustrator in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Caldecott captured action, movement, and humor in a completely new and exciting way. This book includes information about his life and is illustrated with archival material, sketches, and many examples from his books.

Theodor Seuss Geisel (1904 – 1991)

**Cohen, Charles D. *The Seuss, the Whole Seuss, and Nothing But the Seuss: A Visual Biography of Theodor Seuss Geisel*.**

New York: Random House, 2004. 400 pages.

Grades 5 – 8. This biography presents Theodor Seuss Geisel's life, career, and artistic development and examines how he created his innovative children's books. Illustrated with photographs, archival material, and examples of his artwork on every page.

**Krull, Kathleen. The Boy on Fairfield Street: How Ted Geisel Grew Up to Become Dr. Seuss. Illustrated by Steve Johnson and Lou Fancher.**

New York: Random House, 2004. 48 pages.

Grades 3 – 6. Focusing on Geisel's early life, this biography presents his boyhood in Springfield, Massachusetts, his delight in drawing animals in the zoo that his father ran, injustices that he suffered as a child of German immigrants, and his imagination and sense of humor. The last section of the book outlines important events in Geisel's adult life. There are illustrations on every page as well as many examples of art from the Dr. Seuss books.

**Walter Dean Myers (1937 – 2014)**

**Myers, Walter Dean. Bad Boy: A Memoir.**

New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001. 224 pages.

Grades 7 and up. In this autobiography, Myers writes about his early life in a poor family in Harlem. As a boy, he loved reading and wanted to be a writer, but he was also a fighter who got into a lot of trouble. He later experienced a growing awareness of racism, class struggle, and his own identity as a black man. Myers went on to write more than one hundred books for children and young adults, and he received many of children's literature's most distinguished honors and awards.

**Marilyn Nelson (1946 – )**

**Nelson, Marilyn. How I Discovered Poetry. Illustrated by Hadley Hooper.**

New York: Dial Books, 2014. 103 pages.

Grades 6 and up. Marilyn Nelson has won many literary awards for her poetry for adults and young adults. In the fifty poems that make up this book, the African-American author reflects on her childhood in the 1950s and her development as an artist and young woman. She also explores the ways in which her life was influenced by the civil rights movement, the Red Scare, and the feminist movement.

**Margret and H. A. Rey (Margret 1906 – 1996; Hans: 1898 – 1977)**

**Borden, Louise. The Journey that Saved Curious George: The True Wartime Escape of Margret and H.A. Rey. Illustrated by Allan Drummond.**

Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005. 80 pages.

Grades 3 – 6. This dual biography begins with the Reys' childhoods and early married life; the second part tells of the Jewish couple's escape in 1940 as the German army advanced into Paris. They began their terrifying journey on bicycles, with children's book manuscripts among their few possessions. Includes archival material, primary source documents, photos, and exciting illustrations on every page.

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (1900 – 1944)

**Landmann, Bimba. In Search of the Little Prince: The Story of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. Illustrated by the author.**

Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Books for Young Readers, 2014. 34 pages.

Grades 3 – 8. Saint-Exupéry's childhood dream was realized when he became a pilot, first serving in France during World War I, then working as an international mail courier. His book, *The Little Prince*, became one of the most popular children's books ever published. Written in poetic language with large and expressive illustrations.

**Sís, Peter. The Pilot and the Little Prince: The Life of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry.**

**Illustrated by the author.**

New York: Frances Foster Books/Farrar Straus Giroux, 2014. 48 pages.

Grades 3 – 8. This biography of the French World War I aviator and author of *The Little Prince*, presents Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's story in several ways: with short, straightforward text, colorful details with captions, and complex factual information woven into the images. These images capture the exuberance of a little boy's imagination, the grandeur of flight, and the danger of battle.

Allen Say (1937 – )

**Say, Allen. Drawing From Memory. Illustrated by the author.**

New York: Scholastic Press, 2011. 72 pages.

Grades 5 – 8. This autobiography in graphic format tells the story of the children's book author and illustrator, beginning with his boyhood in Japan during World War II. After being rejected by his father because of his artistic interests, he apprenticed with Japan's leading cartoonist and later moved to the United States. With watercolor paintings, original cartoons, vintage photographs, and maps.

Laura Ingalls Wilder (1867 – 1957)

**McDonough, Yona Zeldis. Little Author in the Big Woods: A Biography of Laura Ingalls Wilder. Illustrated by Jennifer Thermes.**

New York: Christy Ottaviano Books/Henry Holt and Company, 2014. 156 pages.

Grades 3 – 6. This chapter-book biography tells of Wilder's life with her pioneer family in the late 1800s and early 1900s and explains how her experiences inspired the *Little House* books. The controversy about the role Wilder's daughter Rose played in the creation and publication of her mother's books is also addressed. Illustrated with black-and-white drawings that evoke the original artwork of the series.

Jacqueline Woodson (1963 – )

**Woodson, Jacqueline. Brown Girl Dreaming.**

New York: Penguin, 2014. 337 pages.

Grades 4 – 8. Writing in free-verse poetry, the author shares what it was like to grow up as an African American in the 1960s and 1970s, living with the remnants of Jim Crow and her growing awareness of the civil rights movement. Woodson's focus is on her family, early life in Ohio, moving with her mother to her grandparents' home in South Carolina, and then living in New York City where she discovered her talent for writing stories.

Ed Young (1931 – )

**Young, Ed. The House Baba Built: An Artist's Childhood in China. Illustrated by the author.**

New York: Little, Brown, 2011. 48 pages.

Grades 3 – 8. Author and illustrator Ed Young tells the story of his life as a child in Shanghai during the Depression and World War II. Despite the war raging outside the house that his father built to keep the family safe, Young's childhood remained full of joy and imagination. Beautifully illustrated in his signature style and with many family photographs.

# Visual Arts

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## Painters, Photographers, and Other Graphic Artists

John James Audubon (1785 – 1851)

**Davies, Jacqueline. *The Boy Who Drew Birds: A Story of John James Audubon. Illustrated by Melissa Sweet.***

Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2004. 32 pages.

Grades 3 – 5. This picture-book biography focuses on Audubon's youth. He was sent from France to Pennsylvania, where his interest in birds led him to observe their migration habits. The author relates how this self-taught painter and ornithologist combined his artistic talent and skills of observation to produce detailed, life-sized portraits of birds. The illustrations are mixed-media artwork, including photos of found objects, re-created pages from a nature sketchbook, and maps.

Romare Bearden (1911 – 1988)

**Greenberg, Jan. *Romare Bearden: Collage of Memories.***

New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2003. 52 pages.

Grades 4 – 8. This book examines the life of the twentieth-century collage artist who drew on his childhood memories of growing up in North Carolina, as well as on his adult years in Harlem, to create pictures that celebrate African-American life. With explanations of his artistic technique and illustrated on every page with large, full-color reproductions of his artwork.

George Bellows (1882 – 1925)

**Burleigh, Robert. *George Bellows: Painter with a Punch!***

New York: Abrams Books for Young Readers, 2012. 39 pages.

Grades 3 – 8. Bellows was an early twentieth-century artist who spent most of his adult life in New York City and created paintings that captured urban life: busy street scenes, construction sites, ringside views of boxing matches, and boys swimming in the East River. With exciting text and richly illustrated with reproductions of his work and photographs. See Burleigh's other excellent biographies of artists, including Edward Hopper, Paul Cézanne and Georges Seurat.

Chuck Close (1940 – )

**Close, Chuck. *Face Book.***

New York: Abrams Books for Young Readers, 2012. 55 pages.

Grades 4 – 8. This autobiography focuses on the author's artistic life, describing the creative processes he uses in the studio and his struggles with disabilities. Close is wheelchair-bound and has severe dyslexia and face blindness (prosopagnosia). The book has an interactive layout that encourages the reader to create new and interesting portrait combinations using his techniques and images. With many reproductions of the artist's work and photographs.

Clementine Hunter (1887 – 1988)

**Whitehead, Kathy. Art From Her Heart: Folk Artist Clementine Hunter. Illustrated by Shane W. Evans.**

New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2008. 32 pages.

Grades 2 – 4. Told with limited text, this is the story of African-American folk artist Clementine Hunter, who, in the segregated 1950s, was denied admission to the gallery that exhibited her work. Throughout her life, she overcame prejudice and poverty to create art, using a variety of found objects. An author's note provides more of Hunter's story and small reproductions of her work. In picture-book format.

Frida Kahlo (1907 – 1954)

**Winter, Jonah. Frida. Illustrated by Ana Juan.**

New York: Arthur A. Levine Books/Scholastic, 2002. 32 pages.

Grades 2 – 4. This picture-book biography of the Mexican painter explores her childhood challenges – she suffered through polio and a horrific bus accident – and her successes as an artist. The illustrations reflect Kahlo's own technique. See also *Viva Frida* by Yuyi Morales with photography by Tim O'Meara, which has some bilingual text and is illustrated with vivid photographed scenes.

**Reef, Catherine. Frida & Diego: Art, Love, Life.**

Boston: Clarion Books/Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014. 140 pages.

Grades 7 and up. This dual biography explores the dramatic lives, marriage and work of Mexican artists Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera. Illustrated with examples of Rivera's and Kahlo's paintings in full color and photos that place events in historical context.

Vasily Kandinsky (1866 – 1944)

**Rosenstock, Barb. The Noisy Paint Box: The Colors and Sounds of Kandinsky's Abstract Art. Illustrated by Mary GrandPré.**

New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014. 33 pages.

This is the story of Russian-born artist, Vasily Kandinsky, one of the very first painters of abstract art. Following him from childhood to adulthood, this picture-book biography uses extraordinary imagery to convey the painter's condition, synesthesia, which caused him to experience color as sounds. The back matter includes four paintings by Kandinsky, an author's note, sources, and links to websites on synesthesia and abstract art.

Dorothea Lange (1895 – 1965)

**Partridge, Elizabeth. Restless Spirit: The Life and Work of Dorothea Lange.**

New York: Viking, 1998. 122 pages.

Grades 6 and up. This is a biography of Dorothea Lange, whose photographs of migrant workers, Japanese-American internees, and scenes of rural poverty helped bring about important social reforms. Illustrated with more than sixty of her photographs. See also, by this author: *Dorothea Lange: Grab a Hunk of Lightning*, a large-format book that contains hundreds of Lange's photographs and a biographical essay.

Leonardo da Vinci (1452 – 1519)

**Byrd, Robert. Leonardo, Beautiful Dreamer. Illustrated by the author.**

New York: Dutton Children's Books, 2003. 50 pages.

Grades 4 – 6. This large-format picture book reflects the richness and imagination of Leonardo's own notebooks. The detailed illustrations include side drawings and quotes from Leonardo's writings, and the text covers Leonardo's art, his brilliance, and his extraordinary scientific and technical inventiveness. See also Diane Stanley's *Leonardo da Vinci* for another richly illustrated biography with substantive text.

Henri Matisse (1869 – 1954)

**Winter, Jeanette. Henri's Scissors. Illustrated by the author.**

New York: Beach Lane Books, 2013. 32 pages.

Grades 2 – 4. In this picture-book biography of the French artist Henri Matisse, the story of his childhood, law career, and artistic recognition is covered in the first pages. Most of the book focuses on his later life when a serious illness confined him to his bed and a wheelchair. He then created some of his finest works – huge and glorious paper cut-outs. The book shows this artistic transformation in visual terms with rich, colorful imagery. See also two more picture books about Matisse that focus on his youth: *The Iridescence of Birds: A Book about Henri Matisse* by Patricia MacLachlan and illustrated by Hadley Hooper, and *Colorful Dreamer: The Story of Artist Henri Matisse*, by Marjorie Blain Parker and illustrated by Holly Berry.

Eadweard Muybridge (1830 – 1904)

**Braun, Marta. Muybridge and the Riddle of Locomotion.**

Richmond Hill, Ontario: Firefly Books, 2013. 23 pages.

Grades 3 – 5. The brief text of this book about Muybridge's photographic career and his invention of very fast photography is illustrated with lenticular images and Muybridge's famous photos of a race horse, a cat, and a man in movement. His technique was an important step in the development of motion pictures.

Georgia O'Keeffe (1887 – 1986)

**Rubin, Susan Goldman. Wideness and Wonder: The Life and Art of Georgia O'Keeffe**

San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2010. 117 pages.

Grades 5 and up. O'Keeffe worked at a time when few women were accepted in the art world. This biography examines the events that shaped her art and how art influenced her life, from her student days to her recognition as an important American painter. With a colorful and dynamic layout and illustrated with family photos, portrait photos by Alfred Stieglitz, and many reproductions of the artist's drawings and paintings.



Pablo Picasso (1881 – 1973)

**Winter, Jonah. Just Behave, Pablo Picasso! Illustrated by Kevin Hawkes.**

New York: Arthur A. Levine Books/Scholastic, 2012. 48 pages.

Grades 2 – 5. As the title suggests, Picasso did not always behave: he refused to conform to popular taste or repeat his own successes. The text provides glimpses of the artist's enthusiasm and commitment to his vision and emphasizes the fact that Picasso's experimentation with style, perspective, and color were not always appreciated by art experts or the public. Illustrated in an exuberant style that matches the subject's energy.

Horace Pippin (1888 – 1946)

**Bryant, Jennifer. A Splash of Red: The Life and Art of Horace Pippin. Illustrated by Melissa Sweet.**

New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013. 32 pages.

Grades 3 – 5. Born the grandson of a slave, Pippin loved to draw from an early age. During World War I, he continued to sketch from the battlefield until he was shot. Despite serious injury to his arm, Pippin dedicated himself to his art, and his paintings are now displayed in galleries and museums across the country. Quotations from his notebooks, letters, and interviews are effectively woven into the energetic illustrations.

Diego Rivera (1886 – 1957)

**Reef, Catherine. Frida & Diego: Art, Love, Life.**

Boston: Clarion Books/Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014. 140 pages.

Grades 7 and up. This dual biography explores the dramatic lives, marriage and work of Mexican artists Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera. Illustrated with examples of Rivera's and Kahlo's paintings in full color and contemporary photos that place events in historical context.

**Rubin, Susan Goldman. Diego Rivera: An Artist for the People.**

New York: Abrams Books for Young Readers, 2013. 50 pages.

Grades 5 – 8. The book follows Rivera's career, identifying his influences and examining the evolution of his style – how he used pre-Columbian imagery to celebrate Mexico's history and Indian heritage. Believing that art should be for the people, he created public murals in both the United States and Mexico. Illustrated with color images of his murals and archival photos of the artist at work.

Bill Traylor (1854 – 1949)

**Tate, Don. It Jes' Happened: When Bill Traylor Started to Draw. Illustrated by R. Gregory Christie.**

New York: Lee & Low Books, 2012. 32 pages.

Grades 3 – 6. This is a picture-book biography of twentieth-century African-American folk artist Bill Traylor, a former slave. At the age of eighty-five, he began to draw pictures based on his memories and observations of life in Alabama. Illustrations are in the style of Traylor's own artwork.

## Sculptors, Ceramists

Louise Bourgeois (1911 – 2010)

**Greenberg, Jan and Sandra Jordan. Runaway Girl: The Artist Louise Bourgeois**

New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2003. 80 pages.

Grades 7 and up. In this biography of the Franco-American sculptor Louise Bourgeois, the authors juxtapose stories of her life – from emotionally abused child to art world outsider to acclaimed artist – with relevant examples of her work, which are often explained in Bourgeois' own words. The book is amply illustrated with photographs.

Dave the Potter (c. 1801 – c. 1870)

**Hill, Laban Carrick. Dave the Potter: Artist, Poet, Slave. Illustrated by Bryan Collier.**

New York: Little, Brown, 2010. 32 pages.

Grades 2 – 5. Little is known about the enslaved man known as Dave the Potter, except that he was an extraordinary craftsman who lived and worked in South Carolina in the 1800s. Despite slavery's anti-literacy laws, he combined his artistry with lines of poetry, which he carved onto his pots. This picture-book biography is illustrated with Collier's powerful earth-toned watercolor and collage art.

**Cheng, Andrea. Etched in Clay: The Life of Dave, Enslaved Potter and Poet. Illustrated by the author.**

New York: Lee & Low Books, 2013. 143 pages.

Grades 5 and up. In this fictionalized biography written in verse, the author tells the story of the enslaved artisan who dared to sign his jars and carve many of them with sayings and short poems that reflected his daily life and experiences. With an author's note that provides historical context.

Leonardo da Vinci (1452 – 1519)

**Fritz, Jean. Leonardo's Horse. Illustrated by Hudson Talbott.**

New York: Putnam's, 2001. 48 pages.

Grades 4 – 7. The first part of this book examines the life and work of Leonardo da Vinci, emphasizing his effort to create a monumental statue of a horse, which was never completed. The time period shifts to 1977, when an American art lover dreamed of completing the statue and presenting it to the people of Italy as a gift from the people of America. Another sculptor eventually completed the work, which was unveiled in Milan in 1999. This unusually shaped and formatted book combines biography, history, art and human interest. With vivid and dramatic illustrations.

Isamu Noguchi (1904 – 1988)

**Hale, Christy. The East-West House: Noguchi's Childhood in Japan. Illustrated by the author.**

New York: Lee & Low Books, 2009. 28 pages.

Grades 2 – 4. This picture-book biography uses spare writing and textured collage to show the early years of sculptor/designer/landscape architect Isamu Noguchi. As a boy of mixed Japanese and American heritage living in Japan, he dedicated himself to building an "east-west" house that reflected his dual cultural heritage and artistic vision, which would also inspire his multifaceted adult achievements. With an extensive author's note and photographs of his work.

## Architects

Antoni Gaudí (1852 – 1926)

**Rodríguez, Rachel. Building on Nature: The Life of Antoni Gaudí. Illustrated by Julie Paschkis.**

New York: Henry Holt & Co., 2009. 32 pages.

Grades 2 – 5. Born in Spain in 1852, Gaudí was inspired by the natural beauty surrounding his home in Catalonia. He became a celebrated and innovative architect through the organic and heavily decorative structures he designed in Barcelona. This picture-book biography focuses on his boyhood and early influences and inspiration. Told in spare, poetic prose and illustrated with striking images which capture Gaudí's unique style.

Julia Morgan (1872 – 1957)

**Mannis, Celeste Davidson. Julia Morgan Built a Castle. Illustrated by Miles Hyman.**

New York: Viking, 2006. 40 pages.

Grades 2 – 5. The architect Julia Morgan was the first woman to attend the École des Beaux Arts, in Paris. She became California's first licensed female architect and designed over 800 buildings, including newspaper mogul William Randolph Hearst's magnificent San Simeon. This picture-book biography conveys Morgan's achievements and introduces many architectural terms and concepts through its illustrations.

I.M. Pei (1917 – )

**Rubalcaba, Jill. I.M. Pei: Architect of Time, Place, and Purpose.**

Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish, 2011. 132 pages.

Grades 5 and up. This book examines the life and work of I. M. Pei, who was born in China and came to the U.S. in 1935 to study architecture. While he stayed in this country, his work also expresses the cultural and artistic values of his childhood home. The author focuses on seven of Pei's projects around the world, including the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum in Boston. Illustrated with many photographs and renderings of his buildings.

## Collective Biography

**Bolden, Tonya. *Wake Up Our Souls: A Celebration of Black American Artists*.**

New York: H.N. Abrams, 2004. 128 pages.

Grades 5 and up. This book introduces important and influential 20th-century artists, including those associated with the Harlem Renaissance. The text also includes sidebars highlighting individual pictures and creators. Published in conjunction with the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the book includes images and reproductions of paintings, sculptures, and photographs.

# Performing Arts

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## Musicians and Composers

Louis Armstrong (1901 – 1971)

**Collins, Terry. Louis Armstrong: Jazz Legend. Illustrated by Richie Pope.**

North Mankato, MN: Capstone Press, 2013. American Graphic series. 32 pages.

Grades 3 – 5. Looking back over his life and music, jazz trumpeter and vocalist Louis Armstrong recalls escaping from poverty and juvenile delinquency, being given a chance to play in a brass band, and finding success as a musician. The graphic novel format makes this an accessible biography. An author's note describes Armstrong's legacy.

Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington (1899 – 1974)

**Pinkney, Andrea Davis. Duke Ellington: The Piano Prince and His Orchestra. Illustrated by Brian Pinkney.**

New York: Hyperion, 1998. 32 pages.

Grades 3 – 5. This picture-book biography focuses on Ellington's musical career. The author notes that Ellington's real instrument wasn't his piano but his orchestra. "Most people called his music jazz. But Duke called it 'the music of my people.'" His composition *Black, Brown, and Beige* celebrated "pride of African heritage and the triumphs of black people, from the days of slavery to the years of the civil rights struggle." The back matter includes more information about Ellington's life, a discography, and a bibliography. Full-color illustrations were prepared with scratchboard and oil paint. See also *Ellington Was Not a Street* by Ntozake Shange and illustrated by Kadir Nelson, which profiles the extraordinary people of the Harlem Renaissance who visited the author's childhood home.

Patrick Sarsfield Gilmore (1829 – 1892)

**Potter, Alicia. Jubilee! One Man's Big, Bold, and Very, Very Loud Celebration of Peace. Illustrated by Matt Tavares.**

Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press, 2014. 40 pages.

Grades 3 – 5. This picture book biography tells the little-known story of Patrick Gilmore, who is considered the father of the American Band. The story focuses on his efforts to launch the World Peace Jubilee concert – celebrating the end of Civil War hostilities and involving hundreds of musicians – which took place in Boston in 1869. Fully illustrated and with an author's note providing additional historic information.

Benny Goodman (1909 – 1986) and Teddy Wilson (1912 – 1986)

**Cline-Ransome, Lesa. Benny Goodman & Teddy Wilson: Taking the Stage as the First Black-and-White Jazz Band in History. Illustrated by James Ransome.**

New York: Holiday House, 2014. 32 pages.

Grades 2 – 4. This joyful picture book relates the parallel lives of young Benny Goodman and Teddy Wilson, who formed the first integrated jazz trio with Gene Krupa, and helped create the musical style known as swing. Each short poem is accompanied by richly hued watercolor illustrations showing people playing, listening to, and dancing to the music of the Benny Goodman Trio. The back matter includes additional information about each man, plus a short “Who’s Who in Jazz,” and a time line. See also *Once Upon a Time in Chicago: The Story of Benny Goodman* by Jonah Winter and illustrated by Jeanette Winter. As a read-aloud introduction to the clarinetist and bandleader known as the “King of Swing.”

Charles Ives (1874 – 1954)

**Stanbridge, Joanne. The Extraordinary Music of Mr. Ives: The True Story of a Famous American Composer.**

Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2012. 32 pages.

Grades 3 – 4. Charles Ives was an innovative composer who heard music in the ordinary cacophony of daily life in the city. The story revolves around the sinking of the Lusitania in 1915 by a German torpedo. Ives was standing on a train platform in New York City when passengers who had just learned the tragic news broke into a hymn, “In the Sweet By and By.” He drew on this personal experience as the basis for the final movement of his Second Orchestral Set. Pen and ink with watercolor illustrations and the simple text capture the historical event that was the source of Ives’ inspiration.

Melba Liston (1926 – 1999)

**Russell-Brown, Katheryn. Little Melba and Her Big Trombone. Illustrated by Frank Morrison.**

New York: Lee & Low Books, 2014. 32 pages.

Grades 2 – 4. This picture book biography introduces Melba Liston, who played with all the major jazz musicians of her time, including Billie Holiday and Duke Ellington. Readers also learn how, as an African American, she met discrimination while on tour. The book design features an expansive horizontal double spread to accommodate illustrations of an extended trombone. The back matter includes an extensive afterword situating Liston’s place in jazz and American history, along with a discography and resources.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 – 1791)

**Stanley, Diane. Mozart: The Wonder Child. A Puppet Play in Three Acts.**

New York: HarperCollins, 2009. 48 pages.

Grades 3 – 6. This picture book biography of Mozart, from age three to his death, is staged as a puppet play, in reference to the Salzburg marionettes popular at the time he composed and performed his music. Stanley did meticulous research for her illustrations. Musical notes are used to indicate footnotes.

## Singers and Songwriters

Marian Anderson (1897 – 1993)

**Freedman, Russell. *The Voice That Challenged a Nation: Marian Anderson and the Struggle for Equal Rights*.**

New York: Clarion Books, 2004. 114 pages.

Grade 6 and up. This thoroughly researched photobiography uses Anderson's own writings and other first-person accounts to examine how she came to symbolize African-American artistic achievement and human dignity during the struggle for civil rights. Illustrated with period photos. Detailed source notes are included.

**Ryan, Pam Muñoz. *When Marian Sang: The True Recital of Marian Anderson, Voice of the Century*. Illustrated by Brian Selznick.**

New York: Scholastic Press, 2002. 40 pages.

Grades 3 – 6. This exceptionally beautiful picture book, with illustrations evoking the time period, tells the story of Anderson's childhood, singing career, and role in the fight for equal rights culminating in her famous concert at the Lincoln Memorial. With a lively and engaging text.

Katharine Lee Bates (1859 – 1929)

**Younger, Barbara. *Purple Mountain Majesties: The Story of Katharine Lee Bates and "America the Beautiful"*. Illustrated by Stacey Schuett.**

New York: Dutton Children's Books, 1998. 32 pages.

Grades 4 – 6. This biography in picture-book format recounts how Katharine Lee Bates, who wrote poetry from her girlhood, traveled as a young unmarried woman and teacher across the country to Colorado Springs, and was inspired to write the poem that became the unofficial national hymn. Illustrated with full-page paintings in saturated color.

Johnny Cash (1932 – 2003)

**Neri, G. *Hello, I'm Johnny Cash*. Illustrated by A.G. Ford.**

Somerville, MA: Candlewick, 2014. 40 pages.

Grades 4 – 6. The story of country music great Johnny Cash, who received the National Medal of Arts and Kennedy Center Honors, is told in free verse with full-page illustrations in rich natural hues. A quote from the text captures Cash's story: "'Hello, I'm Johnny Cash' is how he started every concert from then on. That simple statement said it all. Johnny Cash, the poor country boy from the cotton fields, traveled the world many times over, where he sang for presidents, and the homeless, businessmen and farmers, soldiers and prisoners alike." The back matter includes additional information, a discography, historical events in Cash's lifetime, and suggestions for additional reading.

Celia Cruz (1925 – 2003)

**Chambers, Veronica. *Celia Cruz: Queen of Salsa*. Illustrated by Julie Maren.**

New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, 2005. 40 pages.

Grades 3 – 5. This picture book biography tells the story of Cuban-born Celia Cruz's childhood, early career recording and performing Afro-Cuban music, her work with Tito Puente in creating salsa, and eventual world-wide renown. The author's note provides additional information about Cruz becoming an American citizen, thus being barred from returning to Cuba for the remainder of her life. The sculpture-like illustrations are rendered in rich colors.

Bob Dylan (1941 – )

**Golio, Gary. *When Bob Met Woody: The Story of Young Bob Dylan*. Illustrated by Marc Burckhardt.**

New York: Little, Brown & Co., 2011. 40 pages.

Grades 3 – 5. This picture-book biography chronicles the early life of the singer/songwriter (who was born Robert Allen Zimmerman) and the folk and roots music that influenced him, especially the songs of Woody Guthrie that Dylan emulated: "Songs about real life, hard times and hope. Songs that moved people to speak out and stand up. Songs about the struggle for peace and justice." The full-color illustrations capture the tone of Dylan's music. With an author's note and afterword.

Ella Fitzgerald (1917 – 1996)

**Orgill, Roxanne. *Skit-Scat Raggedy Cat: Ella Fitzgerald*. Illustrated by Sean Qualls.**

Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press, 2010. 40 pages.

Grades 3 – 5. This picture book biography relates the early life and career of Ella Fitzgerald growing up in New York City. Due to her fierce determination and a remarkable voice, she achieved success by overcoming poverty and trouble with the police, and landing in a school for orphans. Full-page illustrations set her story in the context of the time. See also *Ella Fitzgerald: The Tale of a Vocal Virtuosa* by Andrea Davis Pinkney and illustrated by Brian Pinkney.

Woody Guthrie (1912 – 1967)

**Partridge, Elizabeth. *This Land Was Made for You and Me: The Life and Songs of Woody Guthrie*.**

New York: Viking, 2002. 217 pages.

Grades 5 – 8 and up. This photobiography of folksinger/songwriter Woody Guthrie is divided into chronological chapters headed by a quote capturing that portion of his life, and illustrated with archival photographs of Guthrie and the times in which he lived and performed. The lively text tells Guthrie's story without romanticizing the difficulties he encountered in his personal life and in his travels throughout the country, where the injustices he witnessed and the political and social issues of the times inspired a host of songs that have become American classics. See also *Woody Guthrie: Poet of the People* by Bonnie Christensen.



Billie Holiday (1915 – 1959)

**Weatherford, Carole Boston. *Becoming Billie Holiday*. Illustrated by Floyd Cooper.**

Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mills Press, 2008. 117 pages.

Grades 5 – 8. This collaboration between poet Weatherford and artist Cooper sets jazz vocalist Holiday's life in the context of the historical era of Jim Crow. Each poem, told in Holiday's imagined voice, is titled with a song she sang, culminating with "Strange Fruit." The sepia-toned illustrations capture Holiday's troubles, dreams, successes, and the context of her times. With an afterword, very short biographies of the people mentioned in the poems, references, and suggestions for further reading and listening.

Mahalia Jackson (1911 – 1972)

**Orgill, Roxanne. *Mahalia: A Life in Gospel Music*.**

Somerville, MA: Candlewick, 2002. 132 pages.

Grades 6 – 8. This biography focuses on the music as well as the life of gospel singer Mahalia Jackson. Her participation in civil rights actions, including the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the March on Washington, inspired others. The author uses vernacular rhythms, a storyteller's technique, anecdotes, and some invented dialogue to capture Jackson's life and accomplishments. Illustrated with period photographs. See also *Mahalia Jackson: Walking with Kings and Queens* by Nina Nolan and illustrated by John Holyfield. Picture book to read aloud and introduce Jackson to younger readers.

**Pinkney, Andrea Davis. *Martin & Mahalia: His Words, Her Song*. Illustrated by Brian Pinkney.**

New York: Little, Brown and Co., 2013. 40 pages.

Grades 3 – 5. The focus of this picture book is on the remarkable confluence of the voices of Martin Luther King and Mahalia Jackson during the civil rights movement, culminating in their joint appearance at the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. King's words and Jackson's gospel songs are integrated into the narrative and the full-color illustrations that extend across all double spreads. Author and artist notes provide additional historical information and the sources that inspired the illustrations.

John Lennon (1940 – 1980)

**Partridge, Elizabeth. *John Lennon: All I Want Is the Truth*.**

New York: Viking, 2005. 231 pages.

Grades 5 – 8 and up. This photobiography of John Lennon includes frank discussions of his personal life and his professional relationships as he searched for meaning beyond being one of the Beatles. Direct quotes from interviews are woven throughout the narrative. With an afterword, source notes, and suggestions for further reading.

**Rappaport, Doreen. John's Secret Dreams: The Life of John Lennon. Illustrated by Bryan Collier.**

New York: Hyperion, 2004. 40 pages.

Grades 3 – 5. This picture book biography tells the story of John Lennon's life, his activism for a more peaceful world, and the evolution of his music. The distinctive book design incorporates collage illustrations and relevant song lyrics with the narrative formatted as poetry. The back matter includes a discography, resources, and important dates.

**Bob Marley (1945 – 1981)**

**Tony Medina. I and I: Bob Marley. Illustrated by Jesse Joshua Watson.**

New York: Lee & Low Books, 2009. 40 pages.

Grades 3 – 6. Short poems and full-page paintings reveal the life and music of Jamaican Bob Marley, the reggae musician and story teller in the West African griot tradition, whose songs encouraged peace, love and equality. Extensive notes provide the background for the text.

**Leontyne Price (1927 – )**

**Weatherford, Carole Boston. Leontyne Price: Voice of the Century. Illustrated by Raúl Colón.**

New York: Knopf, 2014. 32 pages.

Grades 2 – 4. This picture book tells the story of lyric soprano Leontyne Price, the possessor of a powerful voice that led her to the Julliard School of Music, Broadway, the Metropolitan Opera and La Scala despite the obstacles presented by racism. The text and handsome illustrations briefly tell the story of Price's childhood in Mississippi and path to success inspired by Marian Anderson, culminating in being awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

**Paul Robeson (1898 – 1976)**

**Greenfield, Eloise. Paul Robeson. Illustrated by George Ford.**

New York: Lee & Low Books, 1975/2009. 36 pages.

Grades 3 – 5. This accessible biography of the noted singer, actor, and civil rights activist won the Jane Addams Award and the Coretta Scott King Award. The 2009 edition updates this picture-book biography of Robeson with new information about his fight for equity and fair treatment in the face of criticism and racial discrimination

## Dancers and Choreographers

Josephine Baker (1906 – 1975)

**Powell, Patricia Hruby. Josephine: The Dazzling Life of Josephine Baker. Illustrated by Christian Robinson.**

San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2013. 100 pages.

Grades 4 – 8. This biography of dancer, singer, actress, and civil rights activist Josephine Baker is told in free verse, with illustrations inspired by a series of lithographs of Baker and her Paris revue done by graphic designer Paul Colin in the 1920s. The author and artist notes further reveal her place in the civil rights movement, her charitable spirit, and the research involved in creating an authentic portrait of Baker and her times.

**Winter, Jonah. Jazz Age Josephine. Illustrated by Marjorie Priceman.**

New York: Atheneum Books, 2012. 38 pages.

Grades 2 – 4. The brief, lively text and illustrations of this picture-book biography would serve well as a read-aloud introduction to Baker and her life through good times and bad.

Li Cunxin (1961 – )

**Cunxin, Li. Dancing to Freedom: The True Story of Mao's Last Dancer. Illustrated by Anne Spudvilas.**

New York: Walker & Company, 2007. 40 pages.

Grade 3 – 4. This autobiography in picture-book format, tells the story of the Chinese ballet dancer who was chosen as a youngster by Mao to be trained at the Beijing Dance Academy in China. Cunxin escaped to the West during the Cultural Revolution to become a principal dancer for the Houston Ballet and, subsequently, the Australian Ballet. The illustrator traveled to China for her research and studied traditional Chinese brush painting in preparation for the illustrations that span every double spread. The afterword describes the historical context of the story.

Martha Graham (1894 – 1991)

**Freedman, Russell. Martha Graham: A Dancer's Life.**

New York: Clarion, 1998. 175 pages.

Grades 6 – 8 and up. This photobiography of modern dance pioneer Martha Graham weaves her personal story and work as a performer and choreographer together with the social and cultural history of her times. There are many dramatic photographs capturing the distinctive qualities of her dance technique. Extensive notes document the source of the quotes incorporated into the narrative. See also *Ballet for Martha: Making Appalachian Spring* by Jan Greenberg and Sandra Jordan.

## Actors, Entertainers, and Movie Makers

P.T. Barnum (1810 – 1891)

**Fleming, Candace. *The Great and Only Barnum: The Tremendous, Stupendous Life of Showman P.T. Barnum*. Illustrated by Ray Fenwick.**

New York: Schwartz & Wade Books, 2009. 151 pages.

Grades 5 – 8. The lively narrative of this biography is rich with detail and amusing anecdotes about the 19<sup>th</sup>-century life and times of circus showman P. T. Barnum, who was unapologetic to the end about stoking and satisfying the public's desire for entertainment. When asked by a reporter about his life in show business, he replied: "Amusement may not be the great aim of life, but it gives zest to our days." Sidebars provide additional information about the times, the performers, and the audiences. Archival photographs and primary documents further enhance the narrative. The back matter includes source notes, a bibliography, and recommended websites. See also *Sawdust and Spangles: The Amazing Life of W.C. Coup* by Ralph Covert and G. Riley Mills.

Edwin Booth (1833 – 1893) and John Wilkes Booth (1838 – 1865)

**Giblin, James Cross. *Good Brother, Bad Brother: The Story of Edwin Booth and John Wilkes Booth*.**

New York: Clarion, 2005. 244 pages.

Grades 5 – 8 and up. As the title suggests, the infamous John Wilkes Booth had a brother who was a fine actor and an upstanding citizen and family man. This fascinating dual biography, which incorporates first-hand accounts, reveals the lives and acting careers of both brothers in the context of the Civil War and the impact of the assassination of President Lincoln on the Booth family. Illustrated with archival photographs and primary documents. The back matter includes a bibliography and source notes.

Charlie Chaplin (1889 – 1977)

**Fleischman, Sid. *Sir Charlie: Chaplin, the Funniest Man in the World*.**

New York: HarperCollins, 2010. 268 pages.

Grades 5 – 8. Charlie Chaplin is best known as a comic actor in the early years of silent films, including *The Kid* (in which Chaplin's most famous screen-character, the Little Tramp, makes his debut), *The Great Train Robbery*, *City Lights* and *Modern Times*. He parodied Hitler and the Nazis in *The Great Dictator*. Chaplin's story is told with accessible prose in short chapters, replete with lively anecdotes. Illustrated with period photographs. Back matter includes a time line, a list of his films, and extensive source notes for the quotes incorporated into the narrative.

Harry Houdini (1874 – 1926)

**Weaver, Janice. Harry Houdini: The Legend of the World's Greatest Escape Artist. Illustrated by Chris Lane.**

New York: Abrams Books, 2011. 48 pages.

Grades 4 – 7. The premise of this biography about the magician and escape artist Harry Houdini (born Erik Weisz in Hungary) is that “He made the impossible seem possible, and in doing so, he made people believe they could accomplish anything they set their minds to.” Sidebars and several double-spread illustrations provide additional information about Houdini’s feats in the context of his times. Illustrated with photographs, primary documents, and color-saturated paintings. The back matter includes additional resources and “Helpful hints for young magicians under eighty.” See also Sid Fleischman’s *Breezy Escape! The Story of the Great Houdini*.

Marcel Marceau (1923 – 2007)

**Schubert, Leda. Monsieur Marceau: Actor Without Words. Illustrated by Gerard Dubois.**

New York: Roaring Brook Press, 2012. 40 pages.

Grades 3 – 5.

**Spellman, Gloria. Marcel Marceau: Master of Mime. Illustrated by Manon Gauthier.**

New York: Kar-Ben Publishing, 2011. 32 pages.

Grades 2 – 4.

Two picture book biographies of Marcel Marceau, each with illustrations that capture his art as a mime, prominently feature Marceau’s participation in the French Resistance rescuing Jewish children. Both are excellent as read-aloud introductions to his performance. The afterword in *Actor Without Words* offers additional biographical information about the sources of inspiration for his characters. Both have several photographs of Marceau in costume.

Florence Mills (1896 – 1927)

**Schroeder, Alan. Baby Flo: Florence Mills Lights Up the Stage. Illustrated by Cornelius Van Wright and Yong-Hwa Hu.**

New York: Lee & Low Books, 2012. 40 pages.

Grades 3 – 5. Picture book biography of the remarkable singer and dancer Florence Mills, whose brilliant career as one of the most talented performers of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was cut short by tuberculosis. Slightly fictionalized with imagined dialogue. Told with lively text and watercolor illustrations. With an extensive author’s note.

**Watson, Renée. Harlem’s Little Blackbird: The Story of Florence Mills. Illustrated by Christian Robinson.**

New York: Random House, 2012. 36 pages.

Grades 2 – 4. This picture-book biography set in the context of the Harlem Renaissance is well suited as a read-aloud introduction to the brief life, extraordinary talent, and charitable activities of Florence Mills.

**Annie Oakley (1860 – 1926)**

**Macy, Sue. *Bull's Eye: A Photobiography of Annie Oakley*.**

Washington, DC: National Geographic Society, 2001. 64 pages.

Grades 5 – 8. This biography describes the life of Annie Oakley, the famous sharpshooter who performed throughout her life and travelled with Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. The narrative addresses the myths that were perpetuated about her by publicists eager to sell tickets to her shows. Oakley was particularly devoted to contributing to charitable organizations, including the Red Cross. Quotes from interviews and newspaper reports are incorporated into the narrative. Illustrated with archival photographs and primary documents. The back matter includes a time line, an afterword about Oakley's enduring legacy, and an author's note about the challenge of creating an accurate portrait of her life and accomplishments.

**Mack Sennett (1888 – 1960)**

**Brown, Don. *Mack Made Movies*. Illustrated by the author.**

Brookfield, CT: Roaring Brook Press, 2003. 32 pages.

Grades 3 – 5. This engaging picture book biography of Mack Sennett, the director of silent movies who established Keystone Pictures in 1912, is illustrated appropriately with sepia-toned drawings. Sennett's company produced comedic slapstick films featuring the Keystone Kops, Charlie Chaplin, Fatty Arbuckle, W.C. Fields, and many others. The author's note contains additional information.

## Collective Biography

**Krull, Kathleen. *Lives of the Musicians: Good Times, Bad Times (and What the Neighbors Thought)*. Illustrated by Kathryn Hewitt.**

New York: Harcourt, 1993. 95 pages.

Grades 5 – 8. This book is a collection of succinct biographies of eighteen classical, romantic, and modern composers, with Woody Guthrie tacked on for good measure. Each profile is four pages in length including a portrait, images suggesting daily life at the time, and "Musical Notes" with additional, often amusing information featuring the individual's role in musical history in the context of his/her times.

**Lester, Julius. *The Blues Singers: Ten Who Rocked the World*. Illustrated by Lisa Cohen.**

New York: Hyperion, 2001. 47 pages.

Grades 5 – 8. A grandfather talking to his granddaughter frames the profiles of the lives and music of ten blues singers. The singers are Bessie Smith, Robert Johnson, Mahalia Jackson, Muddy Waters, Billie Holiday, B.B. King, Ray Charles, Little Richard, James Brown, and Aretha Franklin. The writing is lively and engaging, and the layout colorful with large illustrations of each singer.

**Robertson, Robbie, Jim Guerinot, Sebastian Robertson, and Jared Levine. Legends, Icons & Rebels: Music That Changed the World.**

Toronto: Tundra Books, 2013. 119 pages.

Grades 5 – 8. This book contains short biographies of twenty-seven famous musicians from the US and the UK – across six decades – from the major genres of country, blues, jazz, soul, rock and popular song. The large format and dramatic book design incorporate quotes, lyrics, a portrait of each musician, and text explaining their contributions to music and place in musical history. With a time line, a list of illustrators and two CDs with the music.

**Sandler, Martin W. How the Beatles Changed the World.**

New York: Walker Books for Young Readers, 2014. 176 pages.

Grades 6 – 9. An in-depth examination of the impact the Beatles had on music and culture across the globe. The central argument, revealed through topical themes, is that musicians, the Beatles in particular, have had influence far beyond their music.

Extensively illustrated with photographs.

**VanHecke, Susan. Raggin' Jazzin' Rockin'. A History of American Musical Instrument Makers.**

Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mills Press, 2011. 136 pages.

Grades 5 – 8. This book tells the stories of the instrument makers, many of whom immigrated to the United States to seek a better life for their families and opportunity for their enterprises. The featured instruments and their makers are the Zildjian cymbals, Steinway pianos, Conn brass instruments, Martin guitars, Ludwig drums, Hammond electric organs, Fender electric guitars, and Moog synthesizers. Illustrated with archival photography and diagrams. Side bars feature noted musicians who used these instruments.

## Other Arts/History Books

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**Adoff, Arnold. *Roots and Blues: A Celebration*. Illustrated by R. Gregory Christie.**

New York: Clarion Books, 2011. 86 pages.

Grades 3 – 8. This book of poetry and short prose pieces tells the story of slavery in the United States as the context for the creation of the blues. The poetic rhythms in particular capture the experience of slavery, and that of singing and playing the blues. Several of the poems focus on famous blues artists such as Robert Johnson, Muddy Waters, Ma Rainey, Big Joe Turner, John Lee Hooker, and less well-known performers. Christie's signature paintings, featuring blocks of rich color, further capture this confluence of history and American music.

**Clee, Paul. *Before Hollywood: From Shadow Play to the Silver Screen*.**

New York: Clarion Books, 2005. 188 pages.

Grades 5 – 8 and up. This book traces the development of moving images, from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when the “talkies” came into being. The narrative includes short biographies of significant figures in the development of photography and motion pictures. Technical drawings of photographic inventions, archival photos, and original documents accompany the well-researched text that discusses the impact of the new film technology on people’s perception of their world and unfolding events. The back matter includes a timeline, source notes, a bibliography, websites, and a reflection on modern motion pictures, including digital technology.

**Murphy, Claire Rudolf. *My Country ‘Tis of Thee: How One Song Reveals the History of Civil Rights*. Illustrated by Bryan Collier.**

New York: Holt, 2014. 45 pages.

Grades 3 – 5. This book describes the evolution of “My Country ‘Tis of Thee” as a protest song that originally appeared in England in the 1740s as “God Save the King.” Brought to America, the lyrics were adapted through the centuries for use in the American Revolution, the suffragist and labor movements, and the quests for equal rights by African Americans and Native Americans. Each adaptation – an anthem of sorts for its time – is introduced with text explaining the historical context. The full-page illustrations are rendered with collage and paint. With source notes.



**Nelson, Marilyn. Sweethearts of Rhythm: The Story of the Greatest All-Girl Swing Band in the World. Illustrated by Jerry Pinkney.**

New York: Dial Books, 2009. 80 pages.

Grades 4 – 8. During the 1940s, the all-female integrated swing band performed in New York, Chicago, Washington, D.C., and overseas with the USO. The formation and success of the band was partly due to many male musicians serving in World War II. Each member of the sixteen-person band is introduced by a poem titled with a swing tune, and narrated in the imagined voice of the instrument played by that musician. The watercolor and collage illustrations accompanying each poem portray the musicians and the historical context of the war and post-war years. Double-spread illustrations without text situate the band in that historical era. The back matter includes a chronology of the Sweethearts in relation to historical events, and extensive author and artist notes about their research on the band and process of bringing the project into being.

**Rappaport, Doreen. No More! Stories and Songs of Slave Resistance. Illustrated by Shane W. Evans.**

Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press, 2002. 60 pages.

**Rappaport, Doreen. Free at Last! Stories and Songs of Emancipation. Illustrated by Shane W. Evans.**

Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press, 2004. 60 pages.

**Rappaport, Doreen. Nobody Gonna Turn Me 'Round: Stories and Songs of the Civil Rights Movement. Illustrated by Shane W. Evans.**

Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press, 2006. 63 pages.

Grades 3 – 8. This compelling trilogy tells the story of the African-American experience through narrative passages interwoven with songs, quotes, short biographies, powerful paintings, important dates, and author and artist statements.

**Sandler, Martin W. Lincoln Through the Lens: How Photography Revealed and Shaped an Extraordinary Life.**

New York: Walker & Company, 2008. 97 pages.

Grades 5 – 8. This book contains more than one hundred images of Lincoln, providing a complete portrait of the president and the events that defined him. Part history of early photography and part biography, it presents an overview of Lincoln's life and the role that photographs played in his career.

**Stotts, Stuart. We Shall Overcome: A Song That Changed the World.**

New York: Clarion Books, 2010. 72 pages.

Grades 5 – 8. This is a social history that examines the origins of the protest song, “We Shall Overcome,” and describes the importance of the song in the civil rights, labor, and anti-war movements in America. Includes an audio CD with a performance by Pete Seeger. With many archival images and illustrations.

**Tougas, Shelley. Birmingham 1963: How a Photograph Rallied Civil Rights Support.**

Mankato, MN: Compass Point Books, 2011. 64 pages.

Grades 5 – 8. This book explores and analyzes the historical context and significance of the iconic photograph of three African-American teens being hit by a blast of water during the civil rights protests in Birmingham, Alabama, and it shows the power of images and the media to effect social change. Illustrated with many photographs. See also *Little Rock Girl 1957: How a Photograph Changed the Fight for Integration* by the same author, which explores the famous newspaper photo of Elizabeth Eckford trying to enter Little Rock's previously segregated Central High School in 1957.

**Turck, Mary C. Freedom Song: Young Voices and the Struggle for Civil Rights.**

Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2009. 146 pages.

Grades 5 – 8. This book provides an accessible and inspiring introduction to civil rights history and the songs and musical traditions that accompanied the struggle for freedom and equality. The text places events, individual civil rights leaders, performing artists, and the music into historical context from the time of the Middle Passage through current movements to ensure equal rights. With a particular emphasis on the young people who have sung in the Chicago Children's Choirs (Voices of the Choir) over the decades. Illustrated with photographs and original documents. The extensive back matter includes resources for organizing action, web sites, further reading, discography, videos, and the words to the songs on the CD.